



OUR LADY OF SORROWS.



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Miscellanea.

"Scraps of paper" are the order of the day. Few in Ireland regret the dropping of the Partition proposals, but the cynical repudiation of the threatened "settlement" by the very Government that engineered it shows how little the word of our English rulers counts where Ireland is concerned. Fortunately the loss to Ireland has been *nil*; only an additional chapter has been added to the long record of shame which we were in danger of forgetting. With this and the nightmare of Martial Law upon us no one is likely to be longer deceived by cheap platform oratory about other

"scraps of paper" and the "rights of small nationalities." But there is worse than this. For months past large numbers of Irish labourers have been induced by Labour Exchange notices and advertisements in newspapers, and of course by the prospect of better wages, to migrate to England and Scotland for work on farms and in munition factories. A distinct promise was given by the Premier and his fellow "right honourables" that the Military Service Act would not apply to these men. It was on the faith of that promise that they left their homes to earn for themselves and their families the livelihood which English misgovernment forbids them to earn in their own land. The promise was broken with the usual wanton cynicism. Many of these men were forced into the army against their will, many more were thrown into jail as deserters under the Military Service Act. A few cases were brought to the notice of Parliament and more promises were given in some of them—to make inquiries! But now that Parliament has adjourned, most of the dupes who were so callously "shanghaied" must remain without even the poor consolation of having their plight brought into the light of public opinion. The present war was undertaken, we have been told, chiefly to "crush German militarism." If these press-gang methods do not represent militarism in its worst form, then there must be some new definition of hypocrisy. To make matters worse, numbers of Englishmen without a drop of Irish blood in their veins have successfully evaded the Military Service Act by coming to Ireland, and have found no difficulty in getting sufficiently lucrative employment. No harm will come of all this if the obvious moral is taken to heart, and Irishmen stay at home and devote their energies to eke out a livelihood and better their condition in their own country.

We say nothing of the insolent boycotting to which some of these labourers in England have been subjected. Boycotting is a game at which two can play, and we in Ireland have become rather expert at it. We are unfortunately loath to use it unless in extreme cases. But it would not be an ill thing if we turned our attention to bettering the instruction now given us so far as to support our own industries, our own Press, our own home products of all kinds with a new enthusiasm. There would be less need for our people to look to other countries for their living. And no better answer could be given to that "Campaign of Hate" which, as Sir Thomas Esmonde has lately reminded the public in a letter to the Press, is being waged against us in England, than a campaign of enlightened citizenship amongst ourselves inspired by that charity which begins at home.

Horror and disgust must have filled every Irish heart, and indeed the heart of every civilized being, on hearing of the appalling savagery of the London mob who cheered the tolling of the death-bell that announced the execution of Sir Roger Casement. And it was not merely the mob in the

streets, but the women who crowded the windows overlooking the jail that took part in the hilarious outburst. But even this was not enough for the gutter Press of London, who followed the dead patriot to the grave spitting slanders on his dust. These things will not be forgotten in Ireland, nor in the greater Ireland beyond the ocean. But how quickly his services were forgotten by his masters—because he could not sell soul as well as service for a salary. A few short years ago and he was the popular idol of England. Then "it was roses, roses all the way"! One is indeed strikingly reminded of Browning's lines, "The Patriot": the poem might have been written for Casement, and the last verse he would for a surety have gladly taken to himself:—

"Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!
In such triumphs people have dropped down dead.
'Thou, paid by the World—what dost thou owe
Me?' God might have questioned: but now instead
'Tis God shall requite! I am safer so."

The knowledge that he was reconciled to the Church of his fathers before his death—one of the many conversions which were the fruit of the Insurrection—will be a great consolation to his Irish fellow Catholics. And all reports agree in testifying to the fervour and intensity of the devotion with which he prepared for his last moments. One who had many opportunities of seeing him during the days preceding his death has said: "The nun in her cloister could not have been more reverent or more child-like than Casement at his devotions." The reprieve which so many expected and worked for, was probably the thing to which he gave least thought, and he went to his death "firm and erect like the man he was." He is another name in the long martyrology of Irish patriotism. Our readers, we feel sure, have already given him, and will continue to give him a share in their prayers.

Meanwhile it is significant that since the execution of Casement, the regulations governing intercourse between Ireland and neutral countries (America, of course) have been made still more stringent.

The Bishop of Limerick has just done another service to Ireland by his outspoken and justly severe criticism of Mrs. Starkie's pamphlet on "Patriotism" published by the Commissioners of National Education—that is to say, by her husband. His Lordship does not mince words about this "recruiting manifesto," which is meant to divert the minds of Irish children from the history of "their own country, her wrongs and sufferings and her national rights," and fill them with pity for "Belgium and Servia and Montenegro and Mesopotamia and Timbuctoo." Many Press notices of the usual kind beslavered the pamphlet with praise: the Bishop's

brief letter has probably killed it. But Mrs. Starkie's husband is determined to wreak some sort of revenge. So a ukase has gone forth from the office of *National Education* forbidding the wearing of all "political" badges not only in the "school buildings" but "at any time," by children attending the schools or their teachers. "Political" badges are of course what the ordinary Irishman in the street would call "patriotic" badges or emblems: the Irish national colours or the colours or badges of some patriotic or national organization. And it is probably these which the new manifesto has in view—not the Union Jack, or the Orange lily, or the colours of Belgium, Servia or Montenegro or Mesopotamia or Timbuctoo. The children may wear anything but what may remind them that they are Irish children: once more as in the old bad days "There's a cruel law against the wearing o' the green"—in Starkie's schools and their hallowed precincts. In other words, if the children will not learn what the right sort of "Patriotism" is out of Mrs. Starkie's new book, her husband will at least take good care—so far as he can—that they will not grow up in the practice of the pernicious sort, even though it only goes the length of badge-wearing. We don't think badges are much worn in the schools at any time, but if the ukase has any effect at all its effect on Irish children will naturally be to establish a fashion in wearing the most violently patriotic they can get. We think the children are hardly likely to hear of the precious document—the managers are generally blessed with a sense of humour. But the petty and foolish attempt to bully little children and their teachers into "loyalty" is worth record as an instance of the way in which the "National" Education Board has constantly striven to make Irish children into English. Archbishop Whately, one of its original members, confessed that the object of the education given was to "wean the Irish from the abuses of Popery." As a means to that delectable end, the little children were to be taught that they were in reality English and not Irish—Ireland being a county of England, like Yorkshire or Kent. So the children's lesson books had that pretty little poem from the Archbishop's own pen which is not yet forgotten in Ireland:—

"I thank the goodness and the grace,
Which on my birth have smiled,
And made me in these Christian days
A happy English child."

Archbishop Whately has a worthy successor in Dr. Starkie. Let us hope that his efforts in the good cause he has at heart will be equally fruitful. If the weaning from the errors of patriotism has a like result to the weaning from the abuses of Popery, future generations of Irishmen will give him and his fair help-meet a niche in the Irish Temple of Fame beside the venerable author of the immortal lines just quoted.

The Torch of Faith.

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THERE were two occupants of the taxi that turned out of the gates of Dr. Stanley's famous private asylum, an elderly lady and a keen-faced young man.

"My poor boy." Lady Needham laid her hand on her companion's arm. "It is an awful trial, awful. One can only hope, poor dear, that with her mind a blank she is not really unhappy."

The young man's face was set, and in the dim light his aunt could see how the knuckles stood out whitely on his tightly clenched hands.

"And it's hopeless," he said, dully. "Hopeless."

"We can only pray," said Lady Needham, but quickly her companion turned upon her.

"Pray," he said angrily. "What is the use of praying? Doctor Stanley says it's hopeless. Sir William told me the same when I explained the case to him. And then you say 'we can only pray!'"

The discordant sound he made was scarcely a laugh.

"But, Ralph," expostulated his aunt, "God can cure your mother if He wills."

Ralph gave vent to a sharp exclamation of impatience, then pulling himself together he spoke with a sort of studied forbearance, as though arguing with a child.

"But, Aunt Anne, don't you understand? It is a hopeless case. The doctors all agree that my mother is hopelessly insane. Her brain is affected in such a way that nothing can cure it."

"I quite understand, Ralph," replied Lady Needham, gently, "but I repeat we can only pray that God, who has sent her this affliction, may cure her, even though human science pronounces her incurable."

"Aunt Anne, you don't mean that!" He turned a face of blank amazement to his aunt.

"Mean what?" asked Lady Needham.

"That you really think God could cure her when Sir William and all the others say it's hopeless?"

"I don't think it, Ralph, I know it," returned Lady Needham steadily. "I don't say it is likely, for our prayers are so feeble. But possible, certainly."

She spoke quietly, but inwardly she was quaking at the confirmation of the fears that for months past had been haunting her.

Ralph, passing from a non-Catholic school, from a home presided over by a non-Catholic mother and where since his boyhood a father's influence had been missing, passing thence to a London school of medicine famed for its advanced, not to say un-Christian, views on scientific subjects, had lost the

faith which had been his birthright but which his upbringing had allowed to weaken, and now it was dead.

It was not only his faith in the Catholic religion that Ralph Needham had lost. His words showed that it was his faith in the very existence of God Himself, for if you put a limit to God's power He can be no longer God.

The arrival of the motor at the station put an end for the time to the conversation, but Ralph was returning that night to his uncle's house, to bid them goodbye before taking up a post abroad, that as one of the cleverest students of the year in his hospital he had been able to secure.

Hanly Hall was an old Catholic home, with its priest's hiding hole, its private chapel, and its traditions of the past when there was a price on the head of its owner, and of every other Catholic in England. That a Needham of Hanly should belong to any but the old religion seemed almost an impossibility, but when Sir Derick's younger brother had married a Protestant he had imperilled this impossibility, and now, though Ralph Needham's son had adopted no other creed, he had gone still further. In losing the truth he had lost everything. His mother, before she had gone out of her mind, had been a conscientious Protestant. Her son, arraigned by his aunt before his departure, stood confessed—an atheist. His God—if he had one—was Reason. For he had lost the Heaven-sent gift of Faith.

He was not proud of the fact. He was not argumentative, in fact he owned to a regret that the ceremonies he witnessed at Hanly, the Mass and Benediction, the Sacraments, the Divine Presence no longer had any significance to him. They were outward signs, but of meaning they held none to him. It was useless to tell Sir Derick of the state of the case. He was an old man, choleric and with as little patience for his nephew's enthusiasm over the latest medical and scientific discoveries as he would have had for any doubts of the truth of the one, holy, Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. Only Lady Needham and the chaplain spoke together of the tragedy of this young man's loss, pitying him more than blaming him; and very openly, both to his aunt and to the old priest whom he had known since his boyhood, Ralph expressed his own regret at his inability to believe what he recognised as very fine and very consoling to those who had the faith. Only one spark of consolation did Lady Needham receive from this boy, who was but little less dear to her than her own sons, and that was a promise that he gave her, if ever he could honestly say again, that he believed he would return at once to the Catholic Church, as to a mother who never disowns her penitent children, and, furthermore, that he would say daily wherever he might be a form of words, a prayer, call it what you will, "Oh God, if there is a God, have mercy upon me."

Then for a term of years only letters at long intervals told the Needhams of Hanly where his wanderings had taken

Ralph. Twice or thrice he had come back for a month or two of leave, and after a visit to the poor witless woman at Doctor Stanley's he had always gone to Hanly, and always, to his aunt's wistful enquiry, made silently or in words, his answer had been the same. He had not given up the practise he had promised of invoking daily a God, "if there is a God," but his faith was lost, lost and dead, he declared, beyond hope of recall. It was thirteen years since the day he had left his mother under Dr. Stanley's care, and the youth of twenty-two was a man of thirty-five, something of a power in the medical world over the seas where his life had lain, a brilliant lecturer, a man with a following in his school, and an atheist still. He was going home for one of his rare holidays, going to find several changes since his last visit to England. His mother had passed quietly away; his uncle lay amongst his forefathers—when Ralph's time came he could claim no place in that Catholic cemetery—and his cousin and namesake reigned at the old Hall. His aunt had rooms in a London convent, and there was nothing at all like home for this wanderer to go to, though he was coming to that time of life when the thought of a home grows dear to the heart of man. And on board ship, of all places to him unlikely, he met the one woman whom he had ever wished should make a home for him. Mary O'Shaughnessy had been the belle of the up-country station, where her father was a General of Division. It was not only that she had beauty and distinction and brains, she had, moreover, the wonderful nameless charm which at the end of the first week of the voyage made her the most popular person on board with men and all women worth considering. Even girls whom she might have been supposed to rival succumbed to her charm, for jealousy could not be named in the same day as Mary O'Shaughnessy. Truly she had "eyes for all," and apparently also "heart for none." Ralph Needham was not the only man by any means who hoped and thought that he had aroused her interest, but, unlike the others, Ralph did not presume on the ever ready sympathy to ask for more. He was cool and patient, but none the less he realised, and day by day he knew it more and more certainly, that Mary O'Shaughnessy had taken a place in his life no other woman could ever fill. And she liked him. There was no secret, no shade of embarrassment in her frank liking for the keen-faced doctor whom she so often found at her side. But it was only when the voyage was almost over, and the Bay, kindly for once, was allowing a farewell dance to take place, that she guessed his secret, and, to spare him the telling, told her own. Afterwards he never forgot her. She was dressed in white, with the simplicity in which there is hidden so much art, and with a light of peace and happiness in her eyes that would have made beautiful even an insignificant face. She had been dancing all the evening, and now, leaning over the rails, she let the night breezes cool her face caressingly.

Ralph Needham was standing silently beside her, and with a sudden unerring intuition that he was about to speak, she broke the silence.

"It is a lovely night," she said, "such a lovely night, and I have enjoyed it for my last dance."

"Only the last by sea," suggested Ralph, "but certainly to my mind not to be compared to the London balls, on which I suppose you will be embarking next week."

She did not look at him, but shook her head gently.

"Not to be compared, I am sure," she said, "not that I shall have a chance of comparing, for when I get to London I am going—to be a nun."

The waves came with soft swishing sounds against the sides of the ship. Downstairs the music went ceaselessly on. Further forward on the deck another couple were standing—as they stood together—and the girl of that other couple laughed.

Ralph noted all these things, subconsciously. Then he let his eyes be drawn down by the raised eyes of his companion.

"You did not know I was coming home to be a nun," she said, and a wonderful light, wistful perhaps, yet wholly happy made him realise how utterly beyond and above him she was. "I thought at first that people knew——"

"No, I did not know." Ralph's voice was toneless and measured, and though she did not guess the pain it covered, she knew that she had achieved her purpose of silencing him.

Then the other couple, drawing near, freed him from the companionship that had suddenly become intolerable to him. She had never encouraged him. Never encouraged any of those who followed her. What a fool he had been not to have realised that the beautiful Irish Catholic girl was reserved for something better even than earthly love.

The thought had barely taken shape within his brain when, with a sudden overwhelming knowledge, he saw that by his own thought he had recognised the existence, the supremacy of God. Something better. What was that better thing? The love of God.

Scant as had been his Catholic teaching, he knew what it was to be a nun, to give up, of choice, money, position, earthly love, for God's sake.

If, in his years of ignorance and pride, he had been right in saying there was no God, how could a girl like General O'Shaughnessy's daughter give up the world—for nothing? Slowly he went over every day, every hour, that he had known her. The cruel pangs of loss that would be his later on had not yet touched him: he was swallowed up in wonder at the greatness of the love that made a sacrifice such as that she contemplated possible, that lit such light of happiness and peace in eyes that shone like hers. All through the short summer night he never ceased his pacing of the deck. The music died away: the lights went out: under God's sky that for years had been to him merely a phenomena of nature, the

faith of his birthright crept back to its place in Ralph Needham's heart.

They were due at Southampton early, and before five Ralph became aware of movement in the second-class part of the ship. Then from the first-class cabin two or three figures came out and turned in the same direction. One of these figures was unmistakable. Not in a white ball-dress now, but beautiful still in the simplicity of her morning gown, and in the distance, guessing what it meant, Ralph Needham followed Mary to the second-class cabin. She did not see him either on the deck or down below, where she was going to hear Mass.

A French priest was already vested at the temporary altar, and Ralph recognised the ceremonial the same in England or in India, on ship or on shore. The Sacrifice of the Mass was about to be offered to the God to whom Mary O'Shaughnessy was so gladly giving her youth, her beauty, her life. At first he stood, motionless, half-hidden by the curtain of the state-room door. His eyes were upon the kneeling figure near the priest. Then as Mass went on, memories of long past days reminded him of what was happening on the altar.

Like a cold hand clutching his heart the thought of life without the woman he loved tried to push itself between him and the service, but now he found it almost desecration to think of Mary, even with the reverential love that, all unasked, he had given her. He fell upon his knees. Something greater than human love was here now, in this airless ship's cabin. He recognised It. He knew It. And, falling on his knees, the words he had repeated so often to please his aunt rose unbidden to his lips, but now, unlike the many times past, he made no stipulation.

"Oh, God," he murmured. "Oh, God have mercy upon me."

For the Irish girl's faith had rekindled his own, and at last Ralph Needham knew there was a God.

ALICE DEASE.

An Newly-Ordained Priest Speaks.

(Scene: *A homeward-bound ship from Spain, circa 1630.*)

A song in the sails, and the waves aglow,
And the frankincense of spray!
A fair wind blowing a tremolo
To the sea's *Laudamus Te!*
White as a prayer, the seagulls rise
To the canopy above;
And a wave on the breast of the ocean dies,
In an ecstasy of love!

Laus Deo Semper! Upon this brow,
Where the chrism lingers still,
To-morrow a scented breath shall blow
From a gorse-clad Irish hill.
To-morrow these priestly hands shall bless
The kinsmen's kneeling throng;
And an exile's passionate kiss caress
The soil where my sires belong.

With hands that thrill 'neath the Mystery
Of the Burden that they bear,
I shall turn where the bowed heads wait for me,
In the patience of silent prayer;
Then, deep through the hush, the Words shall ring
That summon the God above,
To the sobbing, rapturous welcoming
Of His Irish people's love!

Light on the sky, and Light in the spray,
And the Godhead, veiled in Light,
Close to my heart, that I faint away
In the fire of the Vision's might!
And a wind of Light, and a wind of Love!
And a white ship sailing fast!
And—glory to Him Who rules above—
My native land at last!

HELENA CONCANNON.

The Amusement of the Time-Killer.

THOSE people who kill time do so, according to one cynical commentator, because they have neither the initiative nor the ability to kill anything else, being in a sense baby savages who expend their aimless energies along the line of least or of no resistance at all. They constitute the one species of "murderer" to whom recollection of their actions but serves to bring back a feeling almost of self-congratulatory approval. They blandly tell you what they've been doing, and expect you to pat them on the back for their good luck. Ask whence the necessity to kill time at all, and I won't guarantee that the reply will be either flattering to the giver or enlightening to the recipient. They have succeeded in killing time, and at least expect that you to whom they have given the latest successful recipe for the operation will receive it gracefully.

We are not so much concerned with the people who let time, as it were, kill them into utter inaction, but with those who have found a method of their own for stopping the gaps. "Well," says many a member of this species, "it's not much of a show, but it kills a couple of hours nicely." This, indeed, sums up a good percentage of current comment on present-day amusements in general and on music-hall performances in particular. In other words, the alleged entertainment is a humbug, but it provides a more definite want of activity than aimless street-parading or a would-be serious study of shop-windows. There is a train to be caught, a meal to be negotiated, or sleep to be sought at a certain hour, and lo! there remains the intervening space of time which has to be killed. It might be utilised usefully, of course—we all know that—but we have got into the habit of killing it—and killed it must be.

You pay your money, enter, and sit out the programme. "Variety" is the key-note, and it is wonderful how much variety there is in inanity. From "eccentric and burlesque acrobats"—eccentric being here the same thing as senseless and burlesque, another word for vulgar—you are switched along to a "dainty comedienne," though I have never discovered what the latter really is. Next comes a "leading soprano" to warble much nonsense about waiting till your canoe comes home and your whiskers turn whiter while the best band in the land turns out merry and melodious music, all ending up with the announcement that you are going off on your hun-hun-hunymoon! Then out glides the wide-sleeved individual: "Ladies and gentlemen, with your very kind attention

I shall now endeavour to demonstrate for your amusement some of the most difficult and most novel discoveries in that most difficult of all arts, namely, the art of the illusionist," and forthwith the non-native-looking gentleman appears to drag a thousand yards of anchor-chain out of his waistcoat pocket or a dozen vari-coloured handkerchiefs from his empty silk hat, and everybody applauds. Shortly it is the turn of the red-nosed one. The success of this turn is assured if the "artist" wears well-patched garments of riotous cut, and falls headlong on to the stage, going back immediately to look for the imaginary obstacle. To make success even more assured he may carry a cane about seven inches in length, and brandish it about in the approved fashion. He must, of course, laugh long and loudly at his own jokes—possibly so that the audience may know when to give vent to their feelings of mirth. Then come the cross-talk "patterers," who seem under some contract not to repeat any joke less than ten years old, and the measure of whose success seems largely to depend on the number of times the larger man manages to knock down the smaller one. More "tosh" from a "novel mezzo-soprano," or perhaps a "charming contralto" trills out something about six single sailors at the seaside, and then enter the jugglers. The fairly handy and agile person who throws things about and catches them as they fall is but as a foil to the queerly-attired and asinine-countenanced man who lets the crockery fall from his hands, spills jam on his head, drinks dish-water, and does all sorts of similarly funny things. And the whole makes up the variety entertainment!

I have recently gone five weeks in succession to a music hall, and on four of these occasions one of the songs was a concoction referring to "Ma home in Tennessee." I tried to imagine anyone being amused, being entertained, being interested, being even not bored, by this inane repetition, and failed. And yet many among the audience were regular weekly patrons of the establishment—paying for their admission, and presumably under the belief that they were getting value for their money. The "turns" were of very much the same type week after week—inane songs, monotonous dances, same old juggling antics, and so on. I was trying to find out what the attraction of the music-hall is, what is it that brings crowded houses when higher-class forms of amusement are left in icy isolation.

Much of the secret seems to lie in the fact that a big percentage of the audiences are merely time-killers. The weekly visit is looked upon as something definite to do on some particular night, a handy way of "killing" two hours. And presumably most people are not very touchy about the level of the fare provided for their alleged entertainment when the chief object is to pass time away.

To begin with, the music-hall offers a permanent and regular open door to the public. It is usually comfortable, in a sickly, sensuous way, perhaps; it is free and easy, as the

phrase runs. Performances usually start punctually—a not unimportant item—and there is no pretence about difficulty in following even the most abstruse of the performers. Yet it is not easy to reconcile the nature of the performance with any measure of popularity with an Irish audience, with an audience of average intelligence who have ideas of amusement above those of the lowest form of illiterates. But the fact remains that people of whom one would expect something different are among the regular patrons of amusements where much buffoonery, more inanity, and very little clean fun are the order.

And the music-hall is but one item on the long list of time-killers. Certainly the majority of cinema performances provide more eye-strain than entertainment—at least that has been my experience, though I may be an exception—yet they supply a method of whiling away that dreaded couple of hours, that interval which had to be "killed" some way or other. Surely even their publishers cannot suffer from the delusion that the present-day "popular" English magazines either educate or enlighten, for they are blatantly and unashamedly produced that they may be read in the hour when one wishes for reading matter which does not even leave a memory behind. I took up one of these monthlies lately, and found that its leading contribution was from some chorus lady or other. It informed the reader that the lady was very fond of motoring—in fact her chief ambition, apart of course from that of "getting on" in her profession, was to be able to drive a car herself. Breathless, I read on, and soon discovered that she was very fond of dogs, but—here I thought she missed a great opportunity—was unable to declare that she fancied one particular breed any more than another! And all this from one of these productions which help to make millionaires of their proprietors. The magazines seem keenly alive to the fact that much nonsense and little matter appealing to people of even average intelligence is demanded when the object of the reader is merely to forget the present surroundings. Reading which calls for any exercise of the thinking powers is not required—lightness is the key-note and wonderful the result often is. I have lately listened to a criticism of one of the best English novelists, and the gist of it was: "Oh, but he gets tiring, you know—you cannot fully follow him unless you read his books closely and slowly, and who wants to read a novel slowly?"

Without the fear of having the finger of scorn justly pointed at him, one may be unable to feel any great measure of horror for the purveyors of the class of entertainment which the public will pay for. As the proprietor of one establishment put it: "Yes, call it piffle if you will, but remember that I once tried to produce elevating plays, and just managed to dodge the Bankruptcy Court by inches. Try to educate the public and they go back to the habits of their youth and play truant from you; give them the kind of stuff which presupposes no intelligence on their part and they line up out-

side your doors. Our piffle may not be much to talk about—but it pays.” And until we get a good deal nearer the age of perfection, the first thing which suppliers of entertainment have reasonably to look to is the box-office department—for there is little of the philanthropic spirit left in the direction of the recreative education, so to speak, of the public.

The type of individual which sets out to reform the world often wearies of the task, and one may readily sympathise with anyone who stands aghast when he realises that an amuser of the masses may claim success for his performances if he is sufficiently inane and nonsensical in his antics. The surprising feature of the case is that many people who applaud productions and performers whose most prominent quality is sheer lack of everything sensible are well aware that it is little short of an insult to their intelligence to expect them to be amused by the alleged entertainment, but they gladly suffer on with the notion at the back of their minds that anything at all is good enough to kill time.

The prophets are all predicting our entry on a new era when life is to become more serious, purer and sweeter. There is certainly room for improvement, and perhaps most of all in the direction of our amusements, for it should not be difficult to see that the combination of pleasure and profit is a most feasible one. And there are many alternatives to the “killing” of time—alternatives that are neither unpleasant nor fruitless.

THOMAS KELLY.

A Sprig of Heather.

IT had been raining since lessons were over. Some one said afterwards it had been thundering, but such external disturbances are easily out-clamoured in nursery-land.

“Where would you like us to take you, Miss Smithson?”

“Oh, to Mooredge—my old home, you know, Bobbie, that I told you about, where there are miles and miles of heather and the wind is always blowing. Yes, first-class ticket, of course. You see, I have already taken my seat. Please put my luggage safely in.”

It was the little nursery governess herself who had suggested the game. It admitted of sitting still to finish Dick’s overall. She had fancied that the children’s mother had looked at the crowded work-basket with disapproval the last time she paid a visit to the nursery. Perhaps Miss Smithson would have found life easier if she had not been quite so much given to fancying, but like more things this had its compensations.

“Are we really off now? O Bobbie, what a shrill whistle! No, you can’t both drive the engine. Dick must be stoker. Change here for Mooredge! Why, how quickly we have travelled more than half the distance. Yes, I have changed platforms—you must pretend that, Bobbie—I can’t keep getting up. My ticket is somewhere in the basket. Never mind if you cannot find it. You can let me buy another—‘with the lavish prodigality of make-believe.’ Ah! I can tell we are nearly at our journey’s end. The air is so fresh. I can smell the heather, big, purple hills of it, and the gorse in full bloom. How drowsy the air makes one feel. . . .”

Could it be that she was going home at last! The game they had played at, that afternoon, was surely turning into the happy reality. The train was bearing her onward and onward, further and further away from the four walls and barred nursery windows that had so long hemmed her in. There was already a sprig of heather in her hand. One of her cousins had sent it from home as an earnest of the treasures awaiting her on the moorlands, with their glorious gifts of life and health and freedom for mind and body if only she would have them. Now she was herself again, accountable to none, under no obligation save to repay the wages of love in like coin.

The train had stopped, and beyond the little wayside station she could see the sunlight streaming through the soft blue mist over wide spaces of waving heather, reaching to the farthest horizons like the sunlit hopes of children. On the platform stood the dear aunt who had brought her up and the cousins who had been to her as sisters. She had hardly dared to hope

to see them again. Her aunt had told her it was she herself who had placed an insurmountable obstacle in the way.

"Dear Kittie." How sweet to hear the foolish little name again. Was she really Kittie once more, and miles away from that tiresome, precise Miss Smithson? "Dear Kittie, and so you have repented of your folly and papistical notions which raised such a barrier between us while you insisted on holding to them. Well, we will say no more now you have given them up."

"No, no; not that; never that. I would far rather give up my life than my faith."

What did it mean? What terrible mistake had led her to return, since there was only one condition on which she could do so? The condition had been made sufficiently plain: to accept it would amount to sheer apostacy.

And as she spoke, the glory of the moors, the sights and sounds which had haunted her waking and sleeping thoughts, grew dim and faded, giving place to One majestic and adorable, with arms wide-stretched to bless, clad in kingly purple and crowned with the glory of the sunset. It was as when the old pagan gods of dale and fell and woodlands vanished at the coming of the Christ.

She saw only this, and heard only a confused murmur of voices, which gradually resolved themselves into those of the children playing in the nursery.

"Don't you hear, Miss Smithson! Why, I believe you were half asleep. We have brought you back to Midborough. It was a return ticket, you know. Have you lost it again? Let me help you to look."

"Oh, Bobbie, there goes my work-basket, and, Dick, what have you been doing with the coal scuttle! I only meant you to pretend the stoking. Run and wash your hands, and Bobbie must come and pick up the reels. You want to know what that is? Only a sprig of heather out of a letter I had this morning."

Yet it was not the heather sprig, but her crucifix, she was pressing close against her heart with an intensity of love and reverence which made her plain face beautiful in the sight of her angel.

A NUN OF TYBURN CONVENT.

Our Lady of Sorrows.

A "JUST and devout" life was his, but advancing years only vivified the hope of the venerable man that a great joy awaited him even upon this earth; an unerring voice had whispered to him "that he should not see death before he had seen Christ of the Lord." With happy expectancy his heart longed for the "consolation of Israel." When the appointed hour came he was led by the Spirit into the temple. According to the custom of the law, Mary and Joseph had brought the Divine Infant to the holy place. With a heart overflowing with gratitude to God holy Simeon feasted his aged eyes on the promised Messiah and gently took his precious burden in his arms. Earth never had any attraction for Simeon, and now his fondest wish was gratified; he was ripe for Heaven, and there he was ready to go when the merits of the Redeemer had opened its portals for him. So he asked the Lord for his dismissal from this life—sang his "nunc dimittis," and, obeying the Divine Will, delivered that fateful message which brought untold sorrow to the heart of the young mother—"Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." She who willingly co-operated in the work of our redemption, and who at the Annunciation had given full and free consent to bear her full share of the sacrifice which it entailed—"Be it done unto me according to thy word"—though the prophecy brought a great sorrow to her heart, did not waver in the fulfillment of the great purpose for which she had been specially fashioned by the hand of God. It was to her the revelation of that living martyrdom that awaited her.

Just as the perfection of the Humanity of Christ made Him proportionately capable of suffering—in this He was not like the rest of men—so also was the most perfect of God's creatures—His Blessed Mother—who approached nearest to Him in perfection endowed with a susceptibility to suffering which no one else could lay claim to. And the great cause of that suffering was her love for and compassion for her Son, her Redeemer and her God. Many, indeed, were the ties which bound that Immaculate Mother to her Divine Child. There were those marvellous instincts by which the mother naturally is bound to her child. She knew that it was in view of the foreseen infinite merits of that Son that sin's taint had never obscured the peerless beauty of her soul, and that she stood out unique amongst her kind. Fulfilled to the letter was the prophetic message delivered to her within the temple precincts. When the warning came that the life of

the Divine Child was in danger she hesitated not to face the burning desert sands that lay between her and a safe refuge in Egypt. But the accomplishment of that perilous and wearisome journey was but the passing of one of the several milestones of the *via dolorosa*. Much was to be endured and many things were to happen before the last stage of that journey was accomplished. Awaiting her was that three days' stress and agony when she sought for her lost Child in the streets of the holy city.

When her Son had grown to manhood, and had wearied Himself in "doing good" for the people, teaching them in the temple, in the towns, villages, on the hillsides and by the shores of the lake, calling some back from the shades of death and healing the afflicted, an ungrateful race cry out for his crucifixion and drive Him out of the city and out of their hearts, Mary, His Mother, is a silent witness of that sad procession and of the pitiable sight of "the most beautiful of the Sons of men" tottering on the way under the burden of the Cross. She follows Him to the hilltop and she stands beneath the Cross whilst He offers Himself in sacrifice to His Eternal Father, a bleeding victim for the sins of men. She is a witness of nature's convulsions at the death of its God—the darkened heavens, the rending rocks—not more terrible or heartrending than the inhumanity of those who exulted in their foul work—the deicides whose obduracy was harder even than the rocks. Mocking voices fill the air, the people are startled by strange apparitions—and amidst this weird scene the Sorrowful Virgin hears the voice of Her Divine Son pleading with all the love of His Sacred Heart for those who dug His Hands and Feet and numbered all His bones. His own sufferings—His awful sense of abandonment by Heaven and earth—succeed not in lessening His solicitude for the sorrowful Mother whose pure heart is in union with His in suffering. He bequeathes her, as a precious legacy, to the care of the disciple whom He loved.

When the Sacrifice is Complete, the Sacred Side has been pierced, and the last drop of the Precious Blood shed, she reverently receives the mangled Body in her arms and preparations are made for the funeral. At that funeral she is by right the chief mourner. A few faithful friends busy themselves with the preparations necessary for the consignment of the Sacred Body to the tomb. In His humility the Son of God had left no instructions for His burial. As a sequel to His ignominious death, He knew that the law left no choice in the matter. Joseph and Nicodemus, who were His disciples, secretly busied themselves with the funeral arrangements, and obtained the concession from Pilate that the friends of the dead Christ could carry out the obsequies. The Sacred Body was shrouded in linen, and the customary spices enclosed in the winding sheet. Then the funeral procession wended its way to the tomb. The sorrowful Mother walked nearest to the bier. Magdalen, the relatives of Our Lord, and the holy women followed chanting the

solemn dirge. It was a simple and poor funeral cortège, but it was the greatest that has ever been seen. Christ had been born in poverty, He had lived in poverty, and now poverty was to be the distinguishing mark of his burial. In charity Joseph of Aremathea provided Him with a tomb hollowed out of the rock. The Sacred Body is deposited in its resting-place, the Mother of Dolours casts a last sad look upon her dead Son, the great stone is rolled into its place at the mouth of the tomb, and, with heavy hearts, the mourners retrace their steps to Jerusalem, and the lonely Mother treasured up in her heart all the incidents of her Son's suffering—her life ever afterwards was one long meditation on the Sacred Passion.

COLUMBAN TYNE, C.P.

The Mother Mary.

Mary, to thee the heart was given
For infant hand to hold,
And clasp thus, an eternal heaven
The great earth in its fold.

Thine was the grief, O Mother high,
Which all thy sisters share
Who keep the gate betwixt the sky
And this our lower air;

But unshared sorrows gathering slow
Will rise within thy heart,
Strange thoughts which like a sword will go
Thorough thy inward part.

For, if a woman bore a son
That was of angel brood,
Who lifted wings ere day was done,
And soared from where she stood,

Wild grief would rave on love's high throne;
She, sitting in the door,
All day would cry: "He was my son
And now is mine no more!"

So thou, O Mary, years on years,
From child-birth to the Cross,
Wast filled with yearnings, filled with tears,
Keen sense of love and loss.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

The Flower of Martyrdom.

"Slain from the beginning of the world."—Apoc. xiii., 8.

The world was young, but grief already old
Within the heart of Eve: for nine long years
Had passed since she with Adam saw through tears
The gleam of swords bar Eden's gate of gold.
Yet was God's curse the shadow of a joy.
One day there ran to her their youngest boy,
The little Abel, crying: "Mother, tell
About the garden where you first did dwell,
When God was pleased and every beast a friend."
And when the oft-told story had an end:
"Lo, I will find that garden," cried the lad,
"And you again shall ne'er be aught but glad."

Through the long hours of a summer's day
He sought in vain until the last sun-ray.
His feet and raiment with the thorns were rent,
His heart was sore and all his small strength spent.
Then God took pity on the child and sent
His Angel Gabriel, who o'er him bent
And told him of a fairer Paradise.
Another Mother's Son would one day win
When He had overcome both death and sin.
To open the gate His blood must pay the price.
His name the Lamb of God, so innocent,
So meek of heart this Victim heaven-sent.
He would be, too, the Shepherd of mankind,
And tear His Feet among the thorns to find
His wandering sheep. Yet men would take these thorns,
And see! a cruel crown His Head adorns.

Then quickly to his mother Abel sped,
Eager his news of Eden found to bring;
And telling of God's Lamb whose Blood the price
Which was to open wide His Paradise,
Cried: "Would that I for Him my blood might shed!"
Eve clasped him close, nestling beneath mother-wing,
For at his feet she saw red flowers spring
And a red glory shone around his head.

A NUN OF TYBURN CONVENT.

Ring Lore.

FROM the very earliest times we find a halo of sanctity surrounding rings, and a mystic importance attached to the wearing of them. They have always been regarded as emblems of eternity, and so as natural pledges of the most solemn and sacred bargains. As Herrick happily puts it—

As this round
Is nowhere found
To flaw, or else to sever,
So let our love
As endless prove,
And pure as gold forever!

There is assuredly something more than idle fancy in the association of a ring with the vows of undying love and faith—whether exchanged between human lovers or between the dedicated soul and the Heavenly Bridegroom. The fashion of wearing many finger-rings, with no thought but for their prettiness or commercial value, tends to obscure the original significance of the custom. Yet, in the most frivolous "dress-ring" there lurks, if we would but think, some shadow of the deeper meaning which the rings of religious vocation, ecclesiastical office and holy wedlock express, as it were, substantially and openly. We know that the crude finger-circlets which primitive man fashioned for himself out of iron, or any other metal suited to resist the wear and tear of time, were for him real religious symbols—links which he felt it behoved him to forge between himself and the great realities he saw around him. Around him the Almighty Hand had drawn, he perceived, everywhere in circles. Everywhere was the same endlessness, without beginning, and without limit. The horizon, for instance, was literally a gigantic ring, figuring, in the mythology of the Norsemen, as a stupendous serpent, which lay coiled around *Midgaard*—its world inhabited by men, midway between the abode of the gods and the underworld. Ancient Gothic rings were representations of this serpent—its tail thrust into its mouth to make the perfect circle.

This simplicity of symbolism was gradually elaborated. The jewelled, chased and inscribed rings that became such favourite wear were intended to represent, not only eternity, but the elemental spirits that inhabited eternity, the various guardian genii whom the owner of the ring desired to propitiate. Astrology connected certain precious stones with certain planets and their supposed influences on human fate. Therefore the setting of the "planetary stone" in a finger-ring would be looked upon as one of the sure and speedy ways of securing the planet's influence in favour of the ring's wearer. There is a story of Apollonius of Tyana that he wore on each day of the week a ring containing a different stone, each corresponding to the planet to whom the day was dedicated and whose virtues he desired to secure.

In ancient Egypt finger-rings were usually engraved with representations of the sacred scarab, or set with some rude model of it, in stone or enamel. The scarab was an emblem of creative power, on account of the habit of this beetle of rolling manure and other débris into a spherical shape, and carrying the globe thus made between its fore-pair of legs. We have evidence of the devotion of Christian converts in Egypt to these scarab-rings, in the repeated attempts of the Fathers to christianise a custom they found it well-nigh impossible to uproot. Every Egyptian soldier wore a scarab-ring as part of his military equipment, and as the Egyptians were not, so far as we can learn, a very militarist people, or greatly distinguished for animal courage, it is probable that they relied considerably on these rings as amulets, and means of re-assurance, so that they would have found it the more difficult to resign them at the bidding of their new faith. The Church treated the matter with her usual consideration and tact. Christ, she reminded these wavering disciples, was "the True Scarab!" And little harm could be done if, looking upon their amulet-rings, they remembered *Him*—the Word by whom the worlds were made. Nevertheless, simple, unambiguous ring-symbols, which could not be taken to have a heathen meaning, were urged upon Christian converts. Rings were engraved with figures of the dove, the ship, the anchor—obvious emblems of the Paraclete, the Church, and the Christian's hope in God. Perhaps the greatest favourite among cryptic symbols was the mystic fish—the five letters of whose name in Greek stood for the initials of the five Greek words, *Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour*.

Such simplicity was all the more important, because heresy emulated heathenism. The Gnostics attached superstitious importance to engraved gems set in rings, attributing to them wonders which remind us of the Arabian stones of the "slaves of the ring"—the elemental spirits which were summoned when the ring was rubbed, and would obey the orders and carry the messages of its wearer. We remember, as bearing on the case, the legend of the ring of King Solomon, by which he obtained power to limit the activities of these spirits. Legend says that he called the genii from the four winds, and compelling them to enter caskets or phials, sealed these vessels with his great signet ring, and then cast them into the Red Sea. The virtue of this ring of Solomon was ascribed to its bearing upon it the name of God and symbolising His power over spirits. And so, in justice to the Gnostics, we must say that they generally adjured their slaves of the ring in the name of God, and by archangels and saints. They had still a certain loyalty for the faith they dishonoured. But it needs not to say that this superstitious reliance on rings as instruments of magic was ludicrous, where it was not actually blasphemous, and always uncompromisingly condemned by the Church.

To come to the use of rings in mediaeval Christendom. As the troubled memory of pagan and heretic abuses faded, and the danger of relapsing into them became *nil*, devout imagination had its way, and many mediaeval rings are delightful

examples of Christian allegory. A very interesting Christian variant of the charm or amulet ring is afforded by some specimens preserved in the British Museum. Most of us know the story of the ring of the Lydian king, Gyges, found by a shepherd on the hands of a statue in a subterranean mountain-tomb, and brought to the king, who, by turning it on his hand, found that when the bezel faced inwards the wearer could walk invisible in any company. With this time-honoured legend Christian tradition loved to compare the Gospel story of Our Lord's serene withdrawal from the crowd who sought to stone Him. It seemed an example of His power to walk unseen. The gift of these Christian charm-rings to some well-beloved person was, in effect, a prayer for some portion of this power to be bestowed on him or her: sufficient to save from the hand of the enemy. Upon these rings may generally be read the Latin words: "*Jesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat,*" or perhaps simply the reference to the chapter of St. Luke's Gospel where the words are to be found. The symbolism of precious stones is also boldly employed by Innocent III., who in A.D. 1205 sent four gold rings, set with different gems, to King John of England, and wrote a letter explaining the significance of each. The gold—a type of fire—was an emblem, in every ring, of wisdom from on high. The emerald—earth's colour—was faith. The sapphire—mirroring heaven—was hope. The garnet—with its warm hue—meant charity. The topaz—clear and kindly—represented good works.

As for the diamond—famed in all early traditions as of singular virtue, and the foe of evil things—it was adopted, in Christian allegory, as a type of Our Lord Himself. It is still, as everyone knows, the favourite setting for engagement-rings—a real, though in many cases an unconscious, survival of this thought: a commending of the wearer to Christ's protection. Now that we are on the subject of betrothal rings, we may remind the reader that in mediaeval days there was no special ring for the marriage ceremony. The ring that had been given at betrothal was the one that was used. And this betrothal and nuptial ring was seldom, or never, an entirely plain gold circlet, such as became the fashion, in Puritan times, and partly, it is believed, through Puritan restrictions. In mediaeval plighting there would be often an exchange of rings, each of the lovers giving to the other a ring long worn and loved, and, almost certainly, with some sacred symbol or motto upon it. The Cross, the Five Wounds, the figures of Christ and His Mother, or of the giver's patron saint—these were the favourite adornments of finger-rings in the age of Faith, and these, most frequently, would be the silent witnesses of betrothal, the pledges of a lasting faith. Other devices—which introduced more definitely the idea of human love—were the rings known as *Fede* and *Gimmel*. The *Fede*-ring gets its name from the Latin word for faith. On its bezel were engraved two hands clasping each other, as in troth-plight. The *Gimmel*-ring (its name derived from the French, *jumelle*, twin) was formed of two flat circlets, closely fitted together.

These were divided at betrothal, and one given to each of the lovers. Sometimes there would be three circlets, and then the third would be given to the witness of the betrothal, to be produced on the occasion of the marriage, when the ring would be again joined. The *Gimmel*, in addition to its romantic charm, had a practical usefulness as a means of identification.

The beautiful story of the ring of St. Edward the Confessor is so well known that it would be needless to recount it here. Given by the royal saint in alms to an unknown beggar, it was mysteriously restored to English pilgrims in the Holy Land, who brought it to the King, declaring that they had received it from supernatural hands. After Edward's death the ring, to which mystic healing powers had been attributed in his lifetime, was still sought after by sufferers. Then gradually arose the custom of blessing rings which were the property of the sufferers themselves. Originally this blessing seems to have been conveyed by contact with the sacred ring. Later it seems to have sufficed that the King (the Norman, and later, successors of St. Edward kept up the practice) should rub the ring required to be blessed between his hands, while appropriate prayers were recited. For those who were very far from possessing St. Edward's holiness were yet held to possess the power of conferring healing virtues; for this power, they claimed, had been given to them by the sacred coronation oil. The rings thus blessed were known, popularly, as cramp-rings, because they were thought to be specially efficacious against the cramp. The usual day for hallowing them was Good Friday—an illustration of the inherent sense that their virtues were in reality derived from the merits of Christ's Passion. The rings were plain hoops of gold or silver, and it is interesting to remember that they were made from the gold and silver money that the monarch, each Holy Week, offered in alms.

The use of rings in ecclesiasticism is outside the scope of our paper, so that we omit, perforce, the many beautiful stories that might be told of pontifical rings. We conclude with a modern ring-story of pathetic human interest. Some few years ago, when the betrothal of the young exiled King of Portugal was announced, the news penetrated to the prisons where certain ardent and faithful Royalists were confined by order of the Republic. They had no betrothal gift to make which would, in any temporal sense, be fit for their king, yet they would not leave the event unnoticed and un-tokened. Secretly, from their prison drinking-cups and spoons, they scraped minute particles of the pewter; secretly, and we may guess with what labour, they fashioned from them a little ring, engraved it with the royal arms, and sent it, with a loyal message, to Manoel. It is good to hear that the young king prized it highly and looked at it with tearful eyes. Surely no ring, however costly and elaborately symbolic, could better fulfil the purpose of a ring—to keep the giver in perpetual memory.

G. M. HORT.

An Irish Poet: Francis Ledwidge.

*"Deep in the meadows
I would sing a song."*

LORD DUNSANY has a horror of the "how interesting" school of poets, and I agree with his horror. As an Irish peasant, Francis Ledwidge gave you exquisite poems of refreshing scent and summer dreams . . . of "hiding violets" and "ferny turnings of the woodbine lane," of "misty promises of silver rain," and tells you that "The censer of the eglantine was moved by little lane winds," . . . but above all the beauties in his "Songs of the Fields" he essentially loves the blackbird, "wondrous, impudently sweet," and so Lord Dunsany says he must be treasured and loved as the "poet of the blackbird."

This idea and wish of his I could well understand after once seeing a cleverly mystical little play of his at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, called "The Glittering Gate," when the great, cumbersome, thought-built, tawdrily-devised gate gives to the twisting hands and thumping fist of the dead burglar—all symbolical of the unborn soul—and instead of a Paradise full of golden-winged angels and glorified bairmaids, as he expected, he finds the vault of heaven on a glorious night of stars. It is a beautiful scene—and the curtain closes with the words of the man to his pal: "Jim, there ain't no 'Evin."

God's nature, pure, exquisite, with its own dreaming whisper to man, this is the yearning love of Francis Ledwidge's heart and soul. He has the hatred of the cities, and Lord Dunsany says his book gives nothing to those who look for a "message," but "brings a feeling of quiet from gleaming Irish evenings, a book to read between the Strand and Piccadilly Circus amidst the thunder and the hootings."

I fear the aching for the "sweet little breeze of melody the blackbird puffs upon the budding tree" would be too poignant for me as I read, and a strain more in unison with the eternal pumping and whistling, the terribly city rush, would be better for me.

There is an echo of Ethna Carbery in this fresh Celtic poet. We shall all have our favourites among the "Songs of the Fields," but I feel sure the placid beauty of "Desire in Spring" is hard to beat, the scene is so vivid before one.

I love the cradle songs the mothers sing
The slow, endearing melodies that bring
Sleep to the weeping lids; and when she stops,
I love the roadside birds upon the tops
Of dusty hedges in a world of Spring.

And when the sunny rain drips from the edge
Of mid-day wind, and meadows lean one way,
And a long whisper passes thro' the sedge,
Beside the broken water let me stay,
While these old airs upon my memory play,
And silent changes colour up the hedge.

The utmost quiet and simplicity, but so beautiful in that very tranquility.

Similarly "Behind the Closed Eye" appeals to me. Francis Ledwidge is away from his Slane (in lovely Meath), and his vision has ever before it the old home and the little town, the singing blackbird, and he says:—

I walk the unfrequented ways
That wind around the tangled braes,
I live again the sunny days
Ere I the city knew.

And scenes of old again are born,
The woodbine lassoing the thorn,
And drooping Ruth . . . like in the corn
The poppies weep the dew.

There are seven verses, but two beauties must be especially noticed. You can see the little Irish village with the

. . . whitewashed walls and roofs of brown
And its octagon spire toned smoothly down
As the holy minds within.

This unique simile for the "ordered mind"—the orthodox integrity of the worshippers—is quaint. Then we get his beautiful blackbird:—

And wondrous, impudently sweet,
Half of him passion, half conceit,
The blackbird calls adown the street,
Lie the piper of Hamelin.

This poem should be followed by "The Sister," exquisite if only for the first four lines:—

I saw the little quiet town,
And the whitewashed gables on the hill,
And laughing children coming down
The laneway to the mill.

The dominant note with this poet is quite, infinite quiet; his pictures, his feelings, his diction, his thoughts, all full of that loveliness too rare in these times of rush and fret—the browns and wet greys of his misty winds, his "hill with

dimples full of water where white angels rest," even the "purple breakers of the windy clover" shall "only waft sweet scents of quiet fields."

Shall roll to cool this burning brow of mine,
And there shall come to me when day is told,
The peace of sleep when I am grey and old.

He has that wonderful, instantaneous way of telling us what he sees:—

The windy evening drops a grey
Old eyelid down across the sun,
The last crow leaves the ploughman's way,
And happy lambs make no more fun.

Do we not see this "Evening in February" at once? Is it not the twilight before the spring? Contrast it with "Evening in May," when

The blackbird blows his yellow flute so strong,
And rolls away the notes in careless glee.

"To My Best Friend" is too beautiful to quote from. There is not one poem we would part with in the slender volume; each has its own special beauty: the placid weariness of "Waiting" is wonderful; the inimitable "God's Remembrance," when each line pictures the present forgetfulness and the past remembrance, which is best expressed in "something weak with distance," is not that essentially genius? I think even more so than the lovely ending of a more vivid colouring:

. . . like a little sparkling star
Drowned in the lavender of evening sea.

The double metaphor there of the drowning of remembrance and the note of being put away in lavender of remembrance is remarkable.

"An Old Pain" has sad little beauties of its own, but the sad questioning is not foreign to the poet's sometimes yearning moods. I like

. . . Oh! can the loved dead draw
A near us when we moan, or watching, wait
Our coming in the woods where first we met.
The dead leaves falling on their wild hair wet,
Their hands upon the fastenings of the gate?

"The Lost Ones" is exquisitely pathetic, and so is "A Song," where the poet finds that if he had wealth and

. . . a large home with climbing hollyhocks
And servant maidens singing in the field,

You'd love me; but I own no roaming herds,
My only wealth is songs of love for you,
And now that you are lost I may pursue
A sad life below the depth of words.

"The Coming Poet" is very fine: there is a dramatic force perceptible, and it must be quoted in full:—

Is it far to the town? said the poet,
As he stood 'neath the groaning vane,
And the warm lights shimmered silver
On the skirts of the windy rain.
"There are those who call me," he pleaded,
"And I'm wet and travel-sore."
But nobody spoke from the shelter,
And he turned from the bolted door.

And they wait in the town for the poet
With stones at the gates, and jeers,
But away in the wilds of distance,
In the blue of a thousand years,
He sleeps with the age that knows him,
In the city of the unborn dead,
Rest at his weary insteps,
Fame at his crumbled head.

We hope that these lovely poems are only a few petals from the Celtic flowers he still means to scatter for us. Another Irish poet has said:—

Roses lie upon the grass
Like little shreds of crimson silk.

Meantime we must gather these up as treasures he has left us. Some will argue each poem is a flower in itself, and this is true; but with some of his works one feels that his maturity is not yet reached, that he will hear the blackbird with a still finer ear and watch the "wind-looped flowers" and "lilies' frills," and see the "spiders' hammocks swung" with the eyes of a yet greater soul and yet more tender heart. Fresh he always is: we are told he wrote since five years old but destroyed his work. When he returns to his beloved Slane we may have more of the lovely months—his "August" and "June" (where we meet his loved woodbine again, this time "bee-sucked" and "The hedges are all drowned in green, grassy seas") may be followed by still lovelier pictures of nature's ever-varying moods.

Most critics are fond of comparing one poet of one theme of thought with another of completely opposite tendency, but this is surely one of those grievous pities that exist in the world of letters; but I think Francis Ledwidge has echoes of Wordsworth. I thought so the other day when loving over again:—

I heard a stock-dove sing or say
It's homely tale this very day;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to me came out by the breeze:
He did not cease, but cooed and cooed,
And somewhat pensively he wooed.
He sang of love with quiet blending,
Slow to begin and never ending;
Of serious faith and inward glee,
That was the song—the song for me.

In "The Broken Tryst" we have—

The dropping words of larks, the sweetest tongue
That sings between the dusks, tell all of you;
The bursting white of Peace is all along
Wing-ways, and pearly droppings of the dew
Emberyl the cobwebs' greyness, and the blue
Of hiding violets, watching for your face
Listen for you in every dusky place.

The measured quiet, the love of Nature's most exquisite moods, the shunning of men's haunts, the purity of the poet's feelings—these are his atmosphere.

EDITH PEARSON.



A Literary Circle for Young Readers of "The Cross."

Conducted by FRANCIS.
RULES OF THE GUILD.

- I. The Guild of Blessed Gabriel is a literary circle open to boys and girls under 18 years of age.
- II. The members will be expected to spread devotion to Blessed Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, by practising the virtues of purity, charity and truth; and by living lives worthy of him who is to be their model and guide.
- III. They will at all times observe the conditions under which the competitions will be held.
- IV. They will endeavour to bring as many new members as they can into the Guild of Blessed Gabriel.

THE long summer days are gradually drawing away from us, and autumn comes creeping along, changing as she comes the face of nature with here a dash of deeper colouring, there a toning down of summer's rich greenery, and over all a softening, quietening—often a saddening mistiness that deepens as the weeks pass by. Even in the brilliance of the noonday sun we are at times conscious of the change and realise with a feeling of loneliness that the year which has been such an eventful one for us is growing old, and quiet, and subdued, and is drawing nearer and nearer to the end when it must slip away from us into eternity. But the brightness is still with us, and light and life and gladness of heart and we realise with thankfulness that the year is not quite spent, for there are still many days of autumn's golden glory in which to revel in fresh air and sunshine, in the perfume of flowers and the song of birds. We can still have many pleasant rambles in the evening time, bringing health and happy memories to help us over the dark days of winter. And best of all, before we pass this milestone, we have yet time in which to make our lives more helpful and in every way more worthy of our patron, that the memory of our kindly words and friendly acts may linger happily in the minds of others to help and cheer them in their journey through life. I like to think that in our Guild each year that passes brings to my boys and girls a truer perception of their responsibilities and if possible a firmer resolution to be faithful to their ideals.

Contrasted with last month's heavy budget, my correspondence to-day is light, and some of the letters are mere hasty notes of greeting, welcome nevertheless in their loving remembrance. Some members, on the other hand,

take advantage of the holiday time to write long, beautiful, friendly letters. The first letter I opened was from Eibhlis Seoighe, and I take it that as she does not mention her health she is quite recovered from her recent illness. What a beautiful holiday you are having, Eiblis. It should bring you inspiration for many a day to come. Our faithful little friend Eily Barrett is another whose letter always gives pleasure, and Mary Rennie has quite convinced me that our Guild if properly understood and availed of by members will bring a real and lasting happiness into their lives. I gather from Mary's letter that she has come to know and understand matters of which she would

probably have taken a quite different view if she had never joined us, but I must not quote from that portion of her letter, which is confidential. She notes with pleasure too "the splendid increase in the numbers of the Guild" (to which, by the way, she herself has generously contributed), which "reflects great credit on the good work 'The Cross' is doing, and also shows that the devotion to Blessed Gabriel is steadily progressing." Maureen O'Brien writes me to tell of a ceremony she witnessed lately—the ordination to the priesthood of a friend of hers. And nice chatty letters come also from Evelyn McNamara, Lizzie Malone, and May Prendergast. Kathleen Hardy is now at business and has not much time to spare; nevertheless she found time to do some recruiting for us, and sends me the names of six new members, from whom I shall expect letters next month, viz.: James Patrick Cassidy, Agnes O'Hara, James O'Hara, Roseann O'Kane, Dannie O'Hara, and James Joseph Hardy. John Cullen sends the names of eight new members, who will also write for admission in accordance with the rules, namely, Annie Rogers, Christopher Walsh, Lizzie Bohana, Nellie Hoare, Mary Neill, Ned Kehoe, Peter Begley, and Thomas Fitzgerald. Josephine Caslin is a new member whom I have to welcome this month, and who has already got a number of subscribers to "The Cross" and promises to bring new members to the Guild.

I have to acknowledge a very kind message from Aine Ni Raghnaill, of which mention was omitted last month. Aine left for me at the Retreat an offering of money subscribed by herself and some schoolfellows for the purpose of having a Mass said for the repose of the souls of the Irish Volunteers who died during Easter week and since. The offering reached the proper quarter in due time, a Aine, and the Mass was celebrated without delay.

The mention of Aine reminds me to draw the attention of my children to the Editor's remarks on the Gaelic League in last month's issue. The success of the language movement depends to a very great extent on the children of Ireland, and I would wish that all my boys and girls should give it practical help by applying themselves as far as possible to the study of Irish. I know that a great number of them are already doing this, and the letters I receive seem to indicate that the number will be greatly increased in the coming winter.

A pretty badge, bearing the portrait of Blessed Gabriel, is awarded to the member who brings five new recruits into the Guild.

Our Badge. This month the badge goes to **Kathleen Hardy**, 2a St. James Street, Antrim Road, Belfast, and **John Cullen**, 5 Staplestown Road, Carlow.

All newcomers will please write a personal note to **Francis**, apart from their competition papers, asking to be admitted to membership of the Guild.

Important. Notwithstanding some distinctly good essays on Irish poets, the prize in Senior Competition is awarded to an English girl,

The Prize-winners. whose favourite poet is Wordsworth. The prize-winner is **Mary Rennie**, 231 Robin's Lane, Sutton Oak, St. Helen's. The essays coming next in order to hers were sent by **Eiblis Seoighe**, **Grainne M. Chorra**, **Evelyn McNamara**, **James Henry**, and **Jane Sheridan**.

In the Junior Competition a newcomer is again the winner, and the prize goes to **Josephine Caslin**, of 15 Mountjoy Square,

Members Under 12. Dublin. The letters or essays written by **Patrick Henry** and **Josephine Dunne** are commended, and one essay, which ran the prize-winner very closely, was unsigned by the competitor and so disqualified.

OUR NEXT COMPETITION.

1.—For Members over 12 and under 18 years of age.

A handsome book prize is offered for the best poem on "My Rosary."

2.—For Members under 12 years of age.

A handsome book prize is offered for the best drawing of a Michaelmas Daisy.

All competition papers must be certified by some responsible person as being the unaided work of the competitor. They must have attached to them the

coupon which will be found in this issue (one coupon will be sufficient for all the members of a family), and must be written on one side only of the paper. They must be sent so as to reach the Office of "The Cross" not later than September 14th. All letters to be addressed: **Francis**, c/o "The Cross," St. Paul's Retreat, Mount Argus, Dublin.

PRIZE ESSAY.

My Favourite Poet.

The greatest of nature's poets is William Wordsworth, who was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland. He was educated at Cambridge, where he took his degree without any special distinction, and leaving the university in 1791 he went abroad. In 1793 his first poems were published, "Descriptive Sketches," referring to his tour in Switzerland, and "An Evening Walk," describing the environs of the Lake District. Wordsworth then settled down at Racedown in Somersetshire, together with his sister Dorothy, who was always a sympathetic helper in his work.

On Southey's death in 1843 Wordsworth became Poet Laureate. Wordsworth's poetry has never really been generally popular. This is partly because his calm, philosophic tone does not appeal to every mind, and before he can be appreciated a certain amount of mental preparation is necessary. He is also singularly deficient in any sense of humour. Wordsworth endears himself to lovers of poetry by his beautiful poems in praise of nature. An appreciative critic says of him: "He was the first man who impregnated all his descriptions of nature with sentiment and passion." This attitude towards nature is Wordsworth's most striking characteristic. He dwells on her influence on the minds of men. Several of his passages illustrate another characteristic, which is imagination. To employ his own words, which are immediately an illustration, he does indeed to all thoughts and to all objects

Add a gleam

The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet's dream.

With his purity of thought is united his simplicity of style, so that those who care least for him can find no fault unless it be dulness. Tennyson, his great successor, writes that he "uttered nothing base," and his pure life is reflected in every poem.

Although Wordsworth's longer poems are apt to make one feel depressed, yet lines containing beautiful thoughts and exquisite harmony are to be found in them, while some of his shorter poems are beautiful throughout. In sonnet-writing Wordsworth has no superiors and very few equals. He revived this form of poetry, which had become extinct since Milton's time. In one of Wordsworth's sonnets the poet speaks with great admiration of the different poets of all nations who have used this form, ending with his famous tribute to Milton's sonnets:

In his hand

The thing became a trumpet from whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

Some of his finest sonnets are the descriptive ones. The one written on Westminster Bridge at sunrise gives a beautiful description of London as it appears when the "city doth, like a garment, wear the beauty of the morning." In the sonnet entitled "The World," Wordsworth compares the interest and dignity of modern times with the past, very much to the disadvantage of the former. He shows how the people of modern times possess such miserly propensities that in the pursuit of riches they will not allow themselves time to appreciate the beauties of nature.

Wordsworth was the centre of that brilliant group of writers so often spoken of as the "Lake School," not from any connection between their work and its aims, but because they belonged to the same locality. Wordsworth died in 1850, at Rydal Mount. After his death "The Prelude" was published, which had been written in 1805. To Wordsworth may be applied the words of Gray, for he advanced

Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate:
Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great.

MARY RENNIE.